
Spaghetti with sheeps cheese and black pepper

Spaghetti with sheep's cheese and black pepper (a.k.a. Spaghetti cacio e pepe)

Preparation: 5 mins

Cooking: 10 mins

Difficulty: Easy

Vegetarian

Italians call this recipe "spaghetti cacio e pepe" and it is a cornerstone of Roman cuisine. The recipe is very simple but timing is very important because the spaghetti must be served very warm. Another important point is that the cheese in contact with the spaghetti will tend to dry the whole spaghetti mixture so "how you drain your spaghetti" is the key element to make this dish perfect.

A few words about the cheese: in this context "cacio" is basically the Pecorino romano cheese, a hard sheep's cheese that is used in the central part of Italy as much as the Parmesan is used in the north of the country. Pecorino cheese is normally available in any Italian deli.

SERVES 4

Ingredients:

- 400 g (14 oz) Spaghetti (cooked "al dente" - see How to cook perfect spaghetti)
- 150 g (5 oz) Pecorino romano cheese (freshly grated)
- 10 g (1/3 oz) Black pepper (roughly crushed)

Note: I have not mentioned any salt in this recipe because the cheese is salted, as is the water you use to boil the spaghetti, and this should be enough.

Directions:

Freshly grated Pecorino romano cheese.

I like to crush the pepper grains with a bottle.

And this is all you need!

Pour the cheese into a large bowl.

Sprinkle with all the crushed pepper you have prepared.

Mix the cheese with the pepper.

The pepper is evenly distributed.

Drain the spaghetti but remember to leave some water (the spaghetti should look visibly wet). I normally drain the spaghetti into a large pan and keep some of the boiling water in case I need it a later stage.

Put the spaghetti into the large bowl where you have previously put the cheese and the pepper.

Stir energetically in order to coat all the spaghetti. At this stage, the cheese should melt in contact with the hot spaghetti and the water you left in the spaghetti will help to create a lovely creamy coating.

If you think the spaghetti coating is becoming too dry, you can add a half ladle of the water you saved before.

When you prepare this dish, be sure your guests are ready around the table so you can serve it immediately. Another tip is to preheat the plates; this will help the spaghetti to remain hot.

If you are not very fast and you do not want to compromise the dish, sometimes you can add a knob of butter. This will help to keep the spaghetti moist.

Buon appetito!